



The History of Gurkha Service 1817-1918

The origins of Gurkha service with the British crown go back to the Anglo Nepal war of 1814-16. Mutual respect grew from this conflict, and very soon Gurkhas were enlisted for service in the Army of the East India Company. Their first conflict was the Pindaree War in 1817, and this was followed by a succession of campaigns in which the reputation of the Gurkhas grew from strength to strength.

A defining moment in the history of the Gurkhas came in 1857 during the Indian Mutiny. With many Indian Regiments turning against the British, the Gurkhas remained loyal to a man, holding a key position on the outskirts of Delhi for over three months whilst taking horrific casualties.

As a result of their commitment, the 2nd Goorkhas (as they were known) was awarded the Queen's Truncheon by Queen Victoria. They were also restyled as a Rifle Regiment as a mark of respect by the 60th Rifles alongside whom they had fought. This explains the distinctive dark green uniform and rapid marching pace still seen today in the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

Soon afterwards, Gurkhas found themselves involved in the Second Afghan War, during which the 2nd, 4th and 5th Gurkhas took part in the famous march on Kandahar under General Roberts. After covering 300 miles on foot in 3 weeks, the Gurkhas and British achieved a resounding victory over the armies of Ayub Khan.

The First World War saw Gurkhas committed in France and Flanders, Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Gallipoli, Palestine and Salonika. The 6th Gurkhas, who along with the 2nd are the direct predecessors of today's Royal Gurkha Rifles, gained immortal fame at Gallipoli during the capture from the Turks of the feature later known as "Gurkha Bluff". At Sari Bair they were the only troops in the whole campaign to reach and hold the critical crest line overlooking the straits.





The History of Gurkha Service 1919-1994

Between the wars, the Gurkhas soon found themselves back in Afghanistan for the Third Afghan War, which was followed by numerous campaigns on the North-West Frontier, particularly in Waziristan.

The demands of the Second World War saw the Gurkhas strength increase to a peak of forty battalions, more than the entire British Infantry today. They fought in Syria, the Western Desert, Italy and Greece, from North Malaya to Singapore and from the Siamese border back through Burma to Imphal and then forward again to Rangoon as part of Field Marshall Slim's 14th Army, and forming the backbone of the famous Chindits.

The partition of India in 1947 brought about major change. Until then, the Gurkhas had been part of the Indian Army. On partition, six of the ten Gurkha Regiments remained in India, and four transferred to the British Army, in which their first conflict was the twelve year long Malayan Emergency, followed shortly afterwards by the Borneo confrontation, characterised by extensive jungle patrolling and cross border clandestine raids against the Indonesian Army.

Thereafter, the home of the Gurkhas moved to Hong Kong, although one battalion was always stationed in the UK. It was in this capacity that the 7th Gurkhas deployed to the Falklands in 1982, with much publicised psychological impact on the Argentinean Army.

In 1994, the four Gurkha Regiments amalgamated to form the Royal Gurkha Rifles.

